

PEOPLE

2.4 WINGECARRIBEE FOSTERS A DIVERSE, CREATIVE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY

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Related Policies/Legislation:	NA
Related Documents:	NA

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Pay respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- Acknowledge the connection and trust that Aboriginal people have with maintaining and managing country
- Provide guidance for including Aboriginal cultural ceremonies as part of Council events
- Provide protocols for performing Acknowledgment of Country
- Articulate Council's responsibility and commitment to maintaining and celebrating Aboriginal culture and history.

POLICY STATEMENT

Wingecarribee Shire Council recognises that by acknowledging our past, we are laying the groundwork for a future which embraces all Australians; a future based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for our land.

Aboriginal culture is recognised as one of the world's oldest living cultures. Aboriginal peoples have shown, and continue to show, enormous resilience coupled with generosity of spirit towards other peoples with whom they now share their land.

The Wingecarribee Shire Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of our land. Council acknowledges the Gundungurra and "Tharawal" or "Dharawal" (as it is referred to in historical records)¹ people as the traditional custodians of this place we now call the Wingecarribee Shire.

¹ Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council (2015). W: <http://www.tharawal.com.au/>



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy - Acknowledgement of Country

When facilitating community events, ceremonies and Council Ordinary and Committee meetings, Council will ensure:

A Traditional Land Owner (TLO) is given the opportunity to conduct a Welcome to Country to officially open the event or ceremony

OR

An Acknowledgement of Country is performed.

Acknowledgement of Country:

An Acknowledgement of Country is a way that the wider community can demonstrate respect for Aboriginal protocol and can be performed by any individual, Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, participating in an occasion of any kind. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional custodians of the land or sea where the gathering is taking place.

A Chair or Speaker begins the meeting by acknowledging that the meeting is taking place in the country of the traditional owners. On occasion, there may be disputes about who the traditional owners are. Those who acknowledge the country, can 'acknowledge all the traditional owners of the land' or can 'acknowledge the traditional owners of this land' without naming those people.

Acknowledging Country in this way will not cause offence where there is some potential or actual dispute around ownership.

Suggested wording for an Acknowledgement of Country:

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this land and pay my respect to Elders both past and present. I would also like to extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders present here today.

OR

I would like to acknowledge that this meeting is being held on the Traditional land of the (_____) people, I would like to pay my respect and recognise the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders here today.



Fee for Services:

In providing cultural services such as Welcome to Country, artistic performances and ceremonies Aboriginal people are using their knowledge and intellectual property. As such providers of these services should be appropriately remunerated. The payment should take into account travel to the event, time and complexity of the service and the profile of the event. Individuals and groups have their own set fees.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Council staff and elected representatives and describes the appropriate protocols regarding the opening of official Council ceremonies, events and community meetings.

DEFINITIONS

Recognised Community Elder:

In some Aboriginal communities there may be individuals who are 'recognised elders'. These are people who are respected by the Aboriginal community as elders but have not necessarily undergone traditional initiation ceremonies or are not traditional custodians.

Smoking Ceremony:

Smoking ceremonies are conducted by Aboriginal people with specialised cultural knowledge. The ceremony aims to cleanse the space in which the ceremony takes place. Given the significant nature of the ceremony, smoking ceremonies are usually only performed at culturally significant events.

Traditional Custodian:

Traditional Custodian in relation to the lands are respected custodians of the Aboriginal community on whom their community rely upon to give advice and pass on knowledge. Traditional custodians have "primary spiritual responsibility" for sacred sites on a piece of land, and are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to hunt and gather on that land. Traditional Custodians are the key decision makers for their land.

A Traditional Custodian in relation to the lands means an Aboriginal person who, in accordance with Aboriginal tradition, has social, economic and spiritual affiliations with, and responsibilities for, the lands or any part of them.

Traditional Custodians are entitled by Aboriginal tradition to forage as a right over that land.



Welcome to Country:

A “Welcome to Country” or “Traditional Welcome” is where the Traditional Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander custodian welcomes people to their land at the beginning of a meeting, event or ceremony. This welcome must be conducted by a Traditional Custodian or a locally recognised Elder. Welcome to Country enables the Traditional Custodians to give their blessing to the event, acknowledge their ancestors and is an important mark of respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia’s original inhabitants.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for implementing this policy are shared between Councillors, Executive and staff as follows:

Councillors:

- To lead the community in their understanding of and compliance with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*.
- Comply with Council’s *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*.

Executive:

- To communicate, implement and comply with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*.

Aboriginal Community Development Officer:

- Provide advice and assistance to staff in relation to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*
- To lead the community in their understanding of and compliance with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*
- Ensure Traditional Elders are consulted when reviewing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*.

Staff:

- Comply with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*
- Seek clarification and guidance from the Aboriginal Community Development Officer in relation to the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocol Policy*.



PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The success of this policy will be measured by:

- Consultation and engagement regarding policy is common in everyday practise for staff
- Improved cultural awareness among staff
- Majority of staff are culturally competent and aware of Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country protocols
- Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country is carried out as per policy.

APPROVED BY:

WINGECARRIBEE SHIRE COUNCIL

9 November 2016

